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# Martin Luther King's Enduring Spirit Theme of Community Celebration of Civil Rights Leader Hosted by Lawrence University

*Posted on: January 11th, 2011 by Rick Peterson*

Ysaye Barnwell, author, actress, composer and long-time member of the internationally renowned African-American a cappella ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock, delivers the keynote address at the 20th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Monday, Jan. 17 at 6:30 p.m. in the Lawrence Memorial Chapel.

The celebration, presented by Lawrence University and Toward Community: Unity in Diversity with the support of numerous Fox Valley organizations, churches and individuals, is free and open to the public. The Post-Crescent and WFRV-TV CBS 5 are media partners for the event.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Building a Vocal Community: The Enduring Spirit of Dr. King."

"In 1967, Dr. King reminded us that 'the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.' That message is just as relevant today as it was then," said Kathy Flores, the chair of the MLK Committee and the diversity coordinator for the city of Appleton. "While many years have passed since Dr. King was assassinated, it is still so important that we remember his work, which was instrumental in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and also helped pave the way for the difficult conversations we continue to have today about race, economics, politics, religion, abilities, gender and sexual orientation.

"The Fox Cities certainly has changed considerably in the last 20 years," Flores added, "but our visionary leaders who founded this celebration could see that our beautiful diversity would continue to grow and become something we embrace in the spirit of Dr. King."

Pa Lee Moua, assistant dean of students for multicultural affairs at Lawrence, said it is up to today's citizens to create the kind of society King envisioned.

“A strong community replicates strong citizens, people who support, embrace and educate others on the importance of diversity, social justice and civic engagement,” said Moua. “As Dr. King said, ‘Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.’ He took the first step, now it is up to all of us to continue the journey. It is only then that we will be able to create a community that portrays equal opportunity, respect and justice for all.”



**Ysaye Barnwell**

Barnwell joined Sweet Honey in the Rock in 1979 and has appeared as a vocalist and/or instrumentalist on more than 30 recordings with the ensemble and other artists.

During the past 25 years, Barnwell has established herself as a composer/arranger and master teacher in African-American cultural performance. She developed the workshop “Building a Vocal Community: Singing in the African-American Tradition” that utilizes African-American history, values, cultural and vocal traditions to build community among singers and non-singers alike. The workshop has been conducted around the world and her

pedagogy serves as a model for educators, cultural activists and historians.

A native New Yorker who has lived in Washington, D.C., the past 40 years, Barnwell has written two children's books and composed numerous commissioned works for choral, film, video, dance and theatrical projects, including "Truth Pressed to Earth Shall Rise," a choral work in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. that premiered in 2003 by the Choral Arts Society of Washington, D.C.

Her acting credits include voice-over narration for film, video and radio productions, including the NPR documentary "W.C. Handy's Blues" and appearances in the 1998 Jonathan Demme film "Beloved."

Barnwell earned a Ph.D. in speech pathology from the University of Pittsburgh and taught for more than 10 years at Howard University. She later administered health programs at Children's Hospital National Medical Center and at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.

Highlighting the celebration will be the presentation of Toward Community's annual Jane LaChapelle McCarty Unity in Diversity Award, which honors an area individual who has made great strides in bringing different people in the community together.

The celebration also features readings by area student winners of the annual Martin Luther King essay contest and musical performances led by Barnwell, Lawrence junior Michael Pope, as well as other Lawrence students.

A sign language interpreter will be present for the program and a reception for all in attendance will be held following the event.